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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relation between parenting practices and children's participation in and deciding on their after-school activities, as well as in mother-child interactions during a laboratory task involving planning. Participants were 180 mothers and their 7-year-old children (101 European American and 79 Latino American). During a laboratory visit, mothers completed two questionnaires. One assessed their children's participation in decision making about formal and informal activities outside of school. The other assessed three dimensions of parenting: maturity demands, warmth, and control. During the same visit, mother and child participated in a problem-solving task that involved errand planning. Results indicated relationships between parenting practices and children's participation in and deciding on their after-school activities and in mother-child interaction, although the patterns differed somewhat in the two cultural groups. Findings suggest that these dimensions of parenting are linked to the opportunities children have to practice and develop complex cognitive skills such as planning, although cultural values appear to play a role in the activity domains in which these parenting practices are expressed. (Author)

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Parenting Practices and Children's Participation in Planning

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Abstract

This study examined the relation between parenting practices and children's participation in and deciding on their after-school activities, as well as in mother-child interaction during a laboratory task involving planning. 180 mothers and their 7-year-old children participated (101 European American and 79 Latino American). During a laboratory visit mothers completed two questionnaires. One assessed their children's participation in and decision making about formal and informal activities outside of school. The other assessed three dimensions of parenting: maturity demands, warmth, and control. During the same visit, mother and child participated in a problem-solving task that involved errand planning. Results indicate relations between parenting practices and children's participation in and deciding on their after-school activities and in mother-child interaction in the lab, though the patterns differed somewhat in the two cultural groups. Findings suggest that these dimensions of parenting are linked to the opportunities children have to practice and develop complex cognitive skills like planning, though cultural values appear to play a role in the activity domains in which these parenting practices are expressed.

This research investigates the role that parents play in supporting children's intellectual growth in one domain, the development of planning. The family is an important context for cognitive development. Parents influence emerging cognitive skills through the experiences they provide for their children inside and outside the home. Although the behavioral contingencies that parents use, especially rewards and punishments, have been shown to play an influential role in social developmental processes, parental influences on cognitive development appear to operate differently (Maccoby, 1994). Research has shown that the structure parents provide in face-to-face

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encounters (Rogoff, 1990) and in the activities they arrange for their children (Goncu, 1999) help children learn about and gradually adopt new cognitive skills.

In this study, we concentrate on planning, a problem-solving technique that organizes behavior for future action, because it is essential to mature social and cognitive functioning. As a sustained socialization context, the family frequently organizes or plans future activities. The different cognitive status of family members allows for the social transmission of this skill through processes like scaffolding (Wood & Middleton, 1975) and guided participation (Rogoff, 1990), which are associated with the development of planning (Gauvain & Rogoff, 1989; Radziszewska & Rogoff, 1988). Thus, by its nature and its structure the family context is a primary site for the development of planning skills.

Little is known about the relation of parent-child interaction involving planning to parenting practices. We were interested in whether three dimensions of parenting, maturity demands, warmth, and control, account for systematic variation in parent-child interaction and children's participation in everyday activities. Although typically used to characterize parenting style as a global characteristic (Baumrind, 1973; Maccoby, 1994; Roberts, Block, & Block, 1984), we were interested in how each of these dimensions individually relates to children's opportunities to participate in planning under the tutelage of their parents. We expected maturity demands would relate to opportunities for children to develop planning skills, and that a climate of warmth or responsiveness would support this process. We also expected that parents who stress control may provide fewer opportunities for children to learn about and practice planning.

Method

Participants: 180 mothers and their 7-year-old children (90 boys), with 101 of the families European American and 79 Latino American (31 mothers spoke solely Spanish) participated.

Measures and Procedure: During a laboratory visit, mothers completed two questionnaires: *Your Child's Daily Activities* and the *Child Rearing Practices Report*, and mother and child participated in a problem-solving interaction involving planning.

Your Child's Daily Activities assessed children's participation in organized activities (e.g., team sports), after-school activities inside and outside the home (e.g. playing games, playing at a playground), helping at the parents' business, doing chores, and running errands, and whether the child received a weekly allowance. For each activity in which the child participated, mothers were asked who (parent only, both parent and child, or child only) made the decision about the child's participation. The *Child Rearing Practices Report a*ssessed three dimensions of parenting using items from Block's (1965) Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR). The dimensions are 1) maturity demands, that is expectations of age appropriate behavior and responsibility; 2) warmth, that is affection, support, and concern for the child's well being; and 3) control, that is strict enforcement of rules. Items were averaged within dimensions for each mother. Internal consistency reliabilities for the dimensions ranged from .64 to .72.

For the ***mother-child interaction*** each dyad interacted on a problem-solving task involving planning, i.e. finding the most efficient way of completing several errands in a model village. Independent observers rated mothers on behaviors including whether they were directive of the child, provided guidance, intruded in the child's activity, kept the child involved, encouraged independent behavior, displayed positive or negative affect, and made confusing or misleading comments. Dyadic behavior was also rated including whether responsibility was shared and if responsibility for decision making transferred from the parent to the child. The final plans were scored for priority and efficiency (higher scores were less efficient).

Results

Children's participation was summed within type of activity (organized, in home, out of home). Proportion scores were computed for decisions made by parent only, child only, and both for each activity type. Results are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Maturity Demands. An emphasis on maturity demands was positively related to children's participation in organized and in-home activities and to guidance and encouragement provided by mothers in the lab, and negatively related to the parent alone deciding on organized activities. For European Americans, there was also a positive relation to the child's participation in organized

activities and the parent keeping the child involved on the lab task and a negative relation to the parent alone deciding on the child's participation in out-of-home activities. For Latino Americans there were positive relations with the child working at the parents' business and participation in in-home activities, and a negative relation with the parent alone deciding on in-home activities. For English-speaking Latino families only there was a positive relation between maturity demands and the child alone deciding on organized activities.

Warmth. Few relations appeared between parental warmth and the children's participation in after-school activities and parent-child interaction in the lab, though those that emerged were consistent with the hypothesis. For in-home activities, parental emphasis on warmth was positively related to both parent and child deciding on the child's participation and negatively related to the parent deciding alone. For European Americans, there was a positive relation between parental warmth and the child's participation in organized activities and a negative relation with the parent deciding alone on the child's out-of-home activities. For this group, parental warmth was also negatively related to the transfer of decision-making responsibility from parent to child during the lab task. For Latino Americans, there was a negative relation between parental warmth and the parent alone deciding on the child's in-home activities.

Control. A parental emphasis on control was negatively related to children's participation in organized activities and to the provision by mother of guidance and encouragement during the lab task. There was a positive relation between parental control and the parent deciding alone on the child's organized activities. For European Americans, parental control was related to less efficient plans on the lab task, however there was a positive relation with the priority score, suggesting mixed results for this group on the lab performance for families with higher levels of parental control. Also for this group, parental control was negatively related to both parent and child deciding on children's participation in organized activities. For Latino Americans, parental control was negatively related to the child alone deciding on participation in organized activities, though in separate analyses this maintained for the English-speaking families only.

Conclusions

These results demonstrate a link between parenting approaches and children's after-school experiences. An emphasis on maturity demands was related to increased opportunity for children to participate in and share in decision making about everyday activities, and to behaviors during problem solving with mother related to development in this domain (Gauvain & Rogoff, 1989). An emphasis on warmth may support this process. On the other hand, parental emphasis on control was related to fewer opportunities for children in these areas.

Parenting approaches in the two cultural groups studied related somewhat differently to children's opportunities outside of school. For European Americans, maturity demands seem to play an important role in children's participation in organized activities while for Latino Americans they seem to play a role in activities that may be more centered around family. This may reflect different cultural values about the development of independence and responsibility. There were some differences in Latino American families defined by mother's primary language, which we are currently examining in relation to generational status.

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Table 1. Correlations Between Amount of Participation in Activities and Parenting Dimensions for Type of Activity by Group

	Parenting Dimensions		
	Maturity Demands	Warmth	Control
Total Sample			
Organized activities	.19*	.13+	-.19*
In-home activities	.27**		
Out-of-home activities			-.13+
European American Sample			
Organized activities	.23*	.29**	
In-home activities			.18+
Latino American Sample			
Works at parent business	.27*	.19+	
In-home activities	.31**		
Latino: English-speaking			
Works at parent business	.27+	.27+	
In-home activities	.27+		
Latino: Spanish-speaking			
Runs errands	.30+		
Out-of-home activities	.34+		

Note: $p < .05$*, $p < .01$**, $p < .10$+

Table 2. Correlations Between Proportion of Decision Making and Parenting Dimensions for Activity type and Person(s) Making the Decision by Group

	Parenting Dimensions		
	Maturity Demands	Warmth	Control
ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES			
Total Sample			
Parent only decides	-.15+		.17*
European American Sample			
Child only decides			.20+
Both decide			-.22*
Latino American Sample			
Parent only decides			.24+
Child only decides			-.30*
Latino: English-speaking			
Parent only decides			.30+
Child only decides	.33*		-.41**
IN HOME ACTIVITIES			
Total Sample			
Parent only decides	-.23**	-.18*	.18*
Both decide	.19*	.17*	-.16*
European American Sample			
Parent only decides			.17+
Latino American Sample			
Parent only decides	-.26*	-.24*	
Both decide	.21+		
OUT OF HOME ACTIVITIES			
Total Sample			
Parent only decides	-.14+		
European American Sample			
Parent only decides	-.22*	-.20*	

Note: $p < .05$*, $p < .01$**, $p < .10$+

Table 3. Correlations Between Behavior during Joint Planning and Parenting Dimensions by Group

	Parenting Dimensions		
	Maturity Demands	Warmth	Control
PLANNING BEHAVIOR			
Total Sample			
Priority score	.13+		
Parent provides guidance	.20**		-.19*
Parent encourages independence	.17*		-.23**
Decision making shared			-.14+
European American Sample			
Priority score			.21*
Route efficiency			.22*
Mother keeps child involved	.25*		
Parent displays negative affect		-.17+	
Decision making transferred		-.22*	
Latino: English-speaking			
Priority score			.25+
Latino: Spanish-speaking			
Priority score			-.34

Note: $p < .05$*, $p < .01$**, $p < .10$+